



House of Representatives

General Assembly

File No. 351

February Session, 2014

Substitute House Bill No. 5442

House of Representatives, April 3, 2014

The Committee on Human Services reported through REP. ABERCROMBIE of the 83rd Dist., Chairperson of the Committee on the part of the House, that the substitute bill ought to pass.

AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE-ADMINISTERED GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. Subsection (c) of section 17b-104 of the general statutes is
2 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
3 *1, 2014*):

4 (c) On and after July 1, 1995, the payment standards for families
5 receiving assistance under the temporary family assistance program
6 [and the state-administered general assistance program] shall be equal
7 to seventy-three per cent of the AFDC standards of need in effect June
8 30, 1995.

9 Sec. 2. Section 17b-191 of the general statutes is repealed and the
10 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2014*):

11 (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 17b-190, 17b-195, as
12 amended by this act, and 17b-196, as amended by this act, the

13 Commissioner of Social Services shall operate a state-administered
14 general assistance program in accordance with this section and
15 sections 17b-131, 17b-193, 17b-194, as amended by this act, 17b-197 and
16 17b-198. Notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes, on and
17 after October 1, 2003, no town shall be reimbursed by the state for any
18 general assistance medical benefits incurred after September 30, 2003,
19 and on and after March 1, 2004, no town shall be reimbursed by the
20 state for any general assistance cash benefits or general assistance
21 program administrative costs incurred after February 29, 2004.

22 (b) [No earlier than September 1, 2003, but not later than October 1,
23 2003, the] The state-administered general assistance program
24 [pursuant to this section and any general assistance program operated
25 by a town] shall provide cash assistance of (1) two hundred dollars per
26 month [to a single] for an unemployable person upon determination of
27 such person's unemployability; (2) two hundred dollars per month for
28 a [single transitional individual] transitional person who is required to
29 pay for shelter; and (3) fifty dollars per month for a [single transitional
30 individual] transitional person who is not required to pay for shelter.
31 [No earlier than September 1, 2003, but not later than October 1, 2003,
32 eligible families shall receive cash assistance in an amount that is fifty
33 dollars less than the standard of assistance such family would receive
34 under the temporary family assistance program.] The standard of
35 assistance paid for individuals residing in rated boarding facilities []
36 shall remain at the level in effect on August 31, 2003. No [individual]
37 person shall be eligible for cash assistance under the program if
38 eligible for cash assistance under any other state or federal cash
39 assistance program. The standards of assistance set forth in this
40 subsection shall be subject to annual increases, as described in
41 subsection (b) of section 17b-104.

42 (c) To be eligible for cash assistance under the program, a person
43 shall (1) be (A) eighteen years of age or older; (B) a minor found by a
44 court to be emancipated pursuant to section 46b-150; [(C) under
45 eighteen years of age and a member of a family eligible for cash or
46 medical assistance under the program;] or [(D)] (C) under eighteen

47 years of age and the commissioner determines good cause for such
48 person's eligibility, and (2) not have assets exceeding two hundred fifty
49 dollars or, if such person is married, such person and his or her spouse
50 shall not have assets exceeding five hundred dollars. In determining
51 eligibility, the commissioner shall not consider as income Aid and
52 Attendance pension benefits granted to a veteran, as defined in section
53 27-103, or the surviving spouse of such veteran. No person who is a
54 substance abuser and refuses or fails to enter available, appropriate
55 treatment shall be eligible for cash assistance under the program until
56 such person enters treatment. No person whose benefits from the
57 temporary family assistance program have terminated as a result of
58 time-limited benefits or for [compliance] failure to comply with a
59 program requirement shall be eligible for cash assistance under the
60 program.

61 (d) Prior to or upon discontinuance of assistance, a person
62 previously determined to be a transitional [individual] person may
63 petition the commissioner to review the determination of his or her
64 status. In such review, the commissioner shall consider factors,
65 including, but not limited to: (1) Age; (2) education; (3) vocational
66 training; (4) mental and physical health; and (5) employment history
67 and shall make a determination of such person's ability to obtain
68 gainful employment.

69 Sec. 3. Subsection (a) of section 17b-194 of the general statutes is
70 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July*
71 *1, 2014*):

72 (a) For the purposes of this section and sections 17b-131, 17b-191, as
73 amended by this act, to 17b-193, inclusive, 17b-195, as amended by this
74 act, 17b-197 and 17b-198, (1) an "employable person" means one (A)
75 who is sixteen years of age or older but less than sixty-five years of
76 age; and (B) who has no documented physical or mental impairment
77 prohibiting such person from working or participating in an education,
78 training or other [work readiness] work-readiness program, or who
79 has such an impairment which is expected to last less than two

80 months, as determined by the commissioner; (2) an "unemployable
81 person" means a person who (A) is under sixteen years of age or sixty-
82 five years of age or older or fifty-five years of age or older with a
83 history of chronic unemployment; (B) has a physical or mental
84 impairment prohibiting such person from working or participating in
85 an education, training or other work-readiness program, which is
86 expected to last at least six months, as determined by the
87 commissioner; (C) is pending receipt of supplemental security income,
88 Social Security income or financial assistance through another program
89 administered by the Department of Social Services; (D) is needed to
90 care for a child under two years of age or to care for an incapacitated
91 child or spouse; (E) is a full-time high school student in good standing;
92 or (F) is a VISTA volunteer; and (3) a ["transitional individual" means a
93 person] "transitional person" means one (A) who has a documented
94 physical or mental impairment which prevents employment and is
95 expected to last at least two months, but less than six months, as
96 determined by the commissioner, and who has a recent connection to
97 the labor market, unless circumstances precluded participation in the
98 labor force, as determined by the commissioner; or (B) whose
99 determination of unemployability or disability, as defined by the
100 commissioner, is pending and who provides medical documentation
101 of a severe physical or mental impairment which is expected to last at
102 least six months. A person who is a substance abuser shall be required
103 to participate in treatment, including counseling, and shall be eligible
104 for assistance while waiting for treatment.

105 Sec. 4. Section 17b-195 of the general statutes is repealed and the
106 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2014*):

107 Notwithstanding any provision of the general statutes, when a
108 person who is ineligible for financial assistance due to his or her
109 employability status is currently in or enters a residential substance
110 abuse treatment facility, the [town] Department of Social Services or the
111 Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services shall pay his or her
112 room and board while at such facility, [as an expense reimbursable
113 under the general assistance program by the Department of Social

114 Services or the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services,]
 115 provided the person is eligible to receive medical assistance. [The town
 116 shall be responsible for these costs until the date upon which the
 117 administration of the general assistance program is assumed by the
 118 state or is officially delegated to a town by the Commissioner of Social
 119 Services, at which time the Department of Social Services or the
 120 Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services shall assume
 121 these costs.] Such assistance shall be paid directly to the treatment
 122 facility at a rate established by the Department of Social Services or
 123 negotiated by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction
 124 Services.

125 Sec. 5. Section 17b-196 of the general statutes is repealed and the
 126 following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2014*):

127 [A] Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (c) of section 17b-
 128 191, as amended by this act, a person (1) at least eighteen years of age
 129 and under twenty-one years of age, (2) living with his or her family
 130 [which] that is receiving benefits under the temporary family
 131 assistance program, and (3) who would be an eligible dependent in
 132 such program if under the age of eighteen shall be eligible for state-
 133 administered general assistance in the amount of assistance such
 134 person would be eligible for as a dependent in such family under the
 135 temporary family assistance program.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	17b-104(c)
Sec. 2	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	17b-191
Sec. 3	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	17b-194(a)
Sec. 4	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	17b-195
Sec. 5	<i>July 1, 2014</i>	17b-196

Statement of Legislative Commissioners:

In section 5, "of the general statutes" was deleted for consistency with other provisions of the statutes.

HS *Joint Favorable Subst. -LCO*

The following Fiscal Impact Statement and Bill Analysis are prepared for the benefit of the members of the General Assembly, solely for purposes of information, summarization and explanation and do not represent the intent of the General Assembly or either chamber thereof for any purpose. In general, fiscal impacts are based upon a variety of informational sources, including the analyst's professional knowledge. Whenever applicable, agency data is consulted as part of the analysis, however final products do not necessarily reflect an assessment from any specific department.

OFA Fiscal Note

State Impact:

Agency Affected	Fund-Effect	FY 15 \$	FY 16 \$
Department of Social Services	GF - Potential Savings	Less than 10,000	Less than 10,000

Municipal Impact: None

Explanation

The bill eliminates references to assistance for families under the State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) program. In general, the SAGA program serves single adults, while the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program serves families. Over the past year, the number of SAGA cases categorized as "family" has varied between one and four (out of over 5,000 cases in total). It is unclear whether these cases would be able to migrate to other state assistance programs, such as TFA. If the cases are closed out entirely, there may be a minimal savings to the state.

The bill makes several other technical and clarifying changes that conform the statute to current practice. There is no associated fiscal impact.

The Out Years

The annualized ongoing fiscal impact identified above would continue into the future subject to inflation.

OLR Bill Analysis**sHB 5442*****AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE-ADMINISTERED GENERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.*****SUMMARY:**

This bill makes several changes to the State Administered General Assistance (SAGA) program, which, under the law, provides cash assistance to (1) childless adults unable to work for medical reasons and (2) families that do not qualify for other state assistance.

The bill gives the Department of Social Services (DSS) discretion to set certain SAGA assistance rates by eliminating requirements that (1) the SAGA payment standards for families equal 73% of the former Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program standard of need in effect on June 30, 1995 and (2) a family eligible for SAGA receive \$50 less than the standard assistance the family would receive under the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program (which succeeded AFDC).

It also (1) makes ineligible for SAGA benefits a person who is under age 18 and a member of a family eligible for SAGA benefits and (2) establishes a \$500 asset cap for married couples receiving SAGA. By law, the asset cap for an individual is \$250.

The bill also limits the amount of benefits a person can receive who is (1) age 18 to 21 and (2) living with his or her family that is receiving TFA benefits. Under current law, such a person would be eligible for SAGA funds in the amount he or she would be eligible for as an individual under TFA. The bill instead limits the amount of SAGA funds such a person may receive to the amount for which he or she would be eligible as a dependent in a family, rather than an individual, receiving TFA funds.

The bill also makes several minor, technical, and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2014

BACKGROUND

SAGA and TFA

SAGA initially provided benefits to families who were ineligible for assistance through TFA, the state's version of the federal Temporary and Needy Family (TANF) program. Under former federal TANF eligibility guidelines, families in which the custodian was not biologically related to the children were not eligible for benefits. SAGA provided assistance to those families until the federal eligibility guidelines were expanded to include such families. By law, to be eligible for SAGA, a family must be ineligible for other state assistance programs. Thus, such families are currently ineligible for SAGA benefits. As noted above, SAGA, by law, assists families that do not qualify for these programs and unmarried individuals unable to work for medical reasons.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Human Services Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 18 Nay 0 (03/18/2014)